

To: DETR Director Christopher Sewell

It is evident by your tenure with the state's premier workforce agency, Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, that you have a passion for ensuring all Nevadans have access to ensuring a livelihood for themselves and their families. The Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing would like to bring your attention to this specialty population who inhabit this great state and share similar desires to hearing residents but don't enjoy the same access to your agency's services and resources.

As individuals with varying levels of hearing and language modality, it's been brought to this Commission's attention that there are areas in which DETR can better serve the needs of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (D/DB/HH) Nevadans seeking DETR's assistance.

According to the 2020 US Census, Nevada is #3 most diverse state. It is with sincere hope that the Commission sees DETR give consideration to and take measurable actions to embrace not only this diversity but also the intersectionality of race and ethnicity that also extends within the D/DB/HH community as well.

If DETR were to maximize services to D/DB/HH community, one way would be to set up a Statewide Coordinator for the Deaf (SCD). Nevada no longer has Deaf Centers of Nevada (DCN) which served as a physical service location for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals to go to when they needed support, the Commission and the specialized staff members in Vocational Rehabilitation have been the main points of contact as a result of this vacuum. Establishing a contact person for the entire state of Nevada may be a way to bridge this gap. The D/DB/HH community could benefit from more support and direct services.

The needs of Nevada's D/DB/HH community are unique. The Commission recognizes that in-state professional development opportunities for advocates, specialists, and counselors serving the D/DB/HH community are scarce. Those professionals strive to improve the quality of services provided, so they must seek approval to attend alternate professional development opportunities, most often out-of-state. This in turn impacts our D/DB/HH residents. As Nevada currently does not have a centralized service center for this specialty group, D/DB/HH individuals struggle in various aspects of their lives including assistance with preparation and access to employment services.

When it comes to employers, many are not familiar with how to effectively work with D/DB/HH applicants and employees. Employers statewide would glean much needed insight from DETR should there be the development and offering of a resource binder or electronic hub filled with information, resources and contact information for providers that can assist employers with learning how to work with D/DB/HH employees, for example.

You may already be familiar with this motto the Commission espouses - There is nothing about us, without us! We look forward to collaborating with you to better serve this population's needs in the state of Nevada.